

The *Missouri Employment Outlook* provides an overview of expected Missouri employment trends over a medium-to-long-term horizon: ten years. Growth and decline in employment in individual industries and occupations are projected, using a standardized approach.

The primary purpose of the *Outlook* is to provide help to policy makers, planners and educators in developing employment and training programs; to individuals making job choices or career plans; and to counselors who will help them.

While the employment outlook information can be helpful to the career decision-making process, employment projections should not be the only basis of a choice of career. Other considerations when choosing a career include the training or skills needed for the job, what the job pays, location of the job, and physical demands of the job. It is important that users of these projections understand their nature, scope, and limitations. All users are urged to read the technical notes section.

The employment projections in the *Outlook* are not unconditional predictions of the future. They are probability statements about future activity and are open to further exploration and debate. Government policies, corporate decisions, economic swings and natural or man-made disasters are only a few of the factors that can cause employment in a particular industry or occupation to change in a totally unexpected way.

The industry employment statistics in this publication represent a count of jobs rather than a count of workers. They do not include agricultural employment (except for employment in agricultural services), self-employment or unpaid family workers. The industry statistics in this publication may show different employment trends in comparison to previous *Employment Outlook* publications. The new data reflect updated information on current industry employment trends. When reviewing the industry data, remember that

industrial growth or decline has the greatest influence on occupational employment change. Industrial growth occurs when the demand for goods or services rises and, in turn, the demand for workers to produce those goods and services rises.

The occupational data also represent a count of jobs rather than a count of

workers. However they do include estimates of self-employment and unpaid family workers. Occupations in this publication may also show substantially different employment trends in comparison to previous *Employment Outlook* publications. The new data reflect changes in occupational staffing patterns reported by employers to the re-designed and expanded Occupational Employment Survey. The data also includes updated information on revised industry trends, expected technological change, and revised rates for self-employment and replacement openings. Also some occupations were deleted, added, or had their names or definitions changed.

These projections were completed prior to the tragic events of September 11. Although many of the immediate economic impacts of these events have been obvious, the nature and degree of longer-term impacts remain unclear. The projections are intended to reflect medium- to long-run trends in industry and occupational employment and not to forecast business cycles. The effects of the current recession do not necessarily affect these longer-term trends.

When reviewing the occupational data, one of the key items to check is average annual job openings. A large number of openings means that it should be relatively easy to find a job in that occupation. There are two sources of job openings. The first - employment growth - is most affected by changes in industry employment although other factors may also have an effect. For instance, technological change can raise the demand for some skills while eliminating the need for others. While this shift is going on, demand in the industry as a whole may be rising or falling. New ways of doing business such as self-service, out-sourcing, or 24-hour operations can also affect occupational employment.

Openings due to replacement needs are the second and a very important source of job openings. The replacement openings presented here represent net replacements. These net replacement openings measure the need for new entrants to the labor force as other workers change occupations or leave the labor force. If training is required, these openings identify the minimum number of individuals who must be trained to replace those leaving an occupation

permanently. Although these net replacement openings may understate the total number of replacements needed in many occupations, they often exceed the number of openings due to job growth. Even in occupations that are not expected to grow, net replacement openings may provide employment opportunities.

A second data item to check is the employment change expressed as a percentage. A fast growing occupation (one that has a high percentage increase) means that demand for the occupation is likely to remain strong and may mean there are good chances for higher earnings in the occupation. But a large percentage increase does not mean that there will be a large number of openings. In some cases the number of new jobs may be quite small, making it difficult to get started in that occupation.

Remember that it may be important to distinguish between those industries and occupations that are **rapidly growing** (have a high percentage rate of growth) and those that will have **large growth** (a large number of new jobs.) There may also be many openings in jobs that are neither rapidly growing nor large growth occupations.